

Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. We aim to carry out our duties as a Parish Council competently, efficiently and fairly. However, we recognise that we will not always get it right and so this policy sets out how complaints may be made and how we will respond to them. It also includes detail on the monitoring and reporting of complaints and our complaints process

2. What is a Complaint?

2.1. We define a complaint as “a formal expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Parish Council (including staff and contractors) affecting a person or business.”

A complaint about another organisation or authority’s standard of service or action or lack of action is not a complaint against the Parish Council but, where reasonable, every effort will be made to assist parishioners in making their complaint to the relevant organisation or authority.

2.2. A complaint is not a request for service or an enquiry about a service.

2.3. Complaints can be placed into one of the following four categories, complaints about:

- I.The way in which we carry out our duties
- II.Policies
- III.Administration; and
- IV.Staff (including contractors)

3. How you can make a complaint

3.1. Complaints may be notified to:

- Any parish councillor
- The Parish Council clerk

And may be made:

- In person or through a representative
- By telephone (Parish Clerk Tel: 01622 744969)
- By letter to the Parish Clerk or Parish Council Chairman (Address below)
- By email (E-mail : clerk@boughtonmonchelsea-pc.gov.uk)

4. How we will deal with your complaint

4.1. Recording the Complaint

We will log all complaints and you will be given a unique reference number.

4.2. The Complaints Process

The Council has a two stage complaints process.

Stage 1

Wherever possible, we will try to resolve your complaint. After you have raised the complaint, it will be passed to an appropriate Lead Councillor for response. If the complaint is about that Lead

Councillor it will be passed to the Chair of the Parish Council or another experienced Councillor for response. We aim to respond to all stage 1 complaints within 15 working days. If we are unable to do this we will contact you to let you know the reason why and keep you informed of progress. If you are not happy with the response received at stage 1 you have the right to take the complaint to stage 2 for further investigation. You can request a complaint be taken to stage 2, using any of the means listed at section 3.1. You do not have to submit your request in writing, but you do need to outline your concerns, be prepared to provide your evidence and to tell us why you are unhappy with the response received at stage 1.

Stage 2

The Chair of the Parish Council will be responsible for setting up an independent investigation to investigate and deal with all stage 2 complaints. We aim to respond to all stage 2 complaints within 20 working days. If we are unable to do this we will contact you to let you know the reason why and keep you informed of progress.

Code of Conduct for Members (available on our website or from the Parish Council Clerk)

If you wish to complain about a breach of the Code of Conduct for Members you should contact The Monitoring Officer at Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ, which is the Authority empowered to investigate any breach of the Code of Conduct.

4.4. When dealing with a complaint we will:

Seek to understand your needs and address your complaint

Respond within the time frame agreed or inform you when this is not possible

Respond in plain English

Be accessible, allowing you to provide feedback by whatever means are appropriate for you

Seek to use information from complaints for improvement

5. Remedies for Justified Complaints

5.1. We recognise that from time to time things will go wrong. When a complaint is justified, an apology will normally be appropriate and sufficient but the Council recognises that where a complainant has suffered loss or injustice, that is ongoing and capable of remedy, other action may also need to be considered.

6. Monitoring and Reporting

6.1. Complaints will be monitored and reported to the Parish Council; the reports will be available on our website. Reports will be produced by the Clerk and will include areas where we have improved and or changed our policy or the way in which we carry out our duties as a result of complaints as well as statistics on satisfaction with complaints and the number of complaints received and resolved within the agreed timescales.

7. Complaints from Councillors and MPs

7.1. If we receive a complaint via an MP or Councillor, this will be logged onto our complaints system in accordance with the procedures set out at in section 4. If the complaint has already been logged, the MP or Councillor will be sent a copy of the response to the complaint and it will not be logged again.

8. Unreasonable and Unreasonably Persistent Complainants

8.1. The Local Government Ombudsman uses the following definition:

“ unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants are those complainants who, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with an organisation, hinder the organisation's consideration of their, or other peoples, complaints.”

8.2. In cases where a complainant's behaviour is deemed to be unreasonable or unreasonably persistent; (for example the complaint being pursued has no reasonable basis, or the Council has already taken appropriate action in response to the complaint but the complainant persists), we will request that the complainant follow the steps in the complaints procedure. Once the complaints procedure has been pursued, no further response will be given unless new information is raised.

Complaints address for either the Parish Clerk or Chairman of the Parish Council :

Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council

Parish Office

Boughton Monchelsea village hall

Boughton Monchelsea

Kent

ME17 4HN

Tel : 01622 744969

E-mail : clerk@boughtonmonchelsea-pc.gov.uk